The Report of the Accreditation Visiting Team

Tooele Junior High School 411 West Vine Street Tooele, Utah 84074

April 10-11, 2007



Utah State Office of Education 250 East 500 South P.O. Box 144200 Salt Lake City, Utah 84114-4200

THE REPORT OF THE VISITING TEAM REVIEWING

Tooele Junior High School

411 West Vine Street Tooele, Utah 84074

April 10-11, 2007

UTAH STATE OFFICE OF EDUCATION

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State Superintendent of Public Instruction

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FOREWORD

The major purpose of the accreditation process is to stimulate school growth and improvement so as to increase student achievement.

In these efforts, the school staff makes a comprehensive evaluation of the school's programs, operations, and results. The school determines how actual practices align to stated objectives and resulting outcomes. It is a three-phased evaluation: (1) self-evaluation, (2) on-site evaluation by an external team of educators, and (3) implementation using units of the evaluation to improve the school by effecting thoughtful change.

The evaluation, April 10-11, 2007, was conducted because of the school's desire to ensure quality education for all students in the school, and to increase student achievement.

The entire staff of Tooele Junior High School is commended for the time and effort devoted to studying and evaluating the various facets of the total program and to preparing the materials used by the visiting team. The excellent leadership given by Principal Larry Abraham is also commended.

The staff and administration are congratulated for their desire for excellence at Tooele Junior High School, and also for the professional attitude of all members of the group, which made it possible for them to see areas of weakness and strength and to suggest procedures for bringing about improvements.

While these recommendations may be used to solicit financial support to acquire some of the materials, equipment, and services needed to carry out a more effective program, it is even more important that the faculty and administration utilize them as they continue to evaluate and modify course offerings and administrative and classroom procedures to more dramatically increase student achievement at Tooele Junior High School.

Patti Harrington, Ed.D. State Superintendent of Public Instruction

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TOOELE JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL

ADMINISTRATION AND STAFF

School Administration

Larry Abraham Jared Small	PrincipalAssistant Principal
	<u>Counseling</u> Counselor
Anna Gonzales	Counselor Support Staff
Sherie Lee	Financial Secretary Counselor Secretary Counselor Aide Head Custodian Assistant Custodian Library

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TOOELE JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL

MISSION STATEMENT

At Tooele Junior High we are committed to helping students succeed in the changing world.

BELIEF STATEMENTS

- 1. Student learning is our main priority.
- 2. Academic success is a direct result of student effort.
- 3. A safe and orderly environment is critical for academic achievement.
- 4. All students are capable of making academic and social progress.
- 5. Each student is a valued individual with unique characteristics.
- 6. A successful partnership among students, parents, teachers, administrators, and community members fosters student achievement.

MEMBERS OF THE VISITING TEAM

Dr. John Goldhardt, Snow Canyon Middle School, Washington County School District, Visiting Team Chairperson

Kim Baker, West Hills Middle School, Jordan School District

Debby Herget, Oquirrh Hills Middle School, Jordan School District

Judy O. Olson, Millcreek Junior High, Davis School District

VISITING TEAM REPORT

TOOELE JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL

CHAPTER 1: SCHOOL PROFILE

Tooele Junior High is a grade 7-8 school located in Tooele, Utah, and is part of the Tooele County School District. The school has been located at its current site since 1964. Tooele is located thirty miles west of Salt Lake City in the Tooele Valley. It has been a remote location in the past, but is now considered a bedroom community of Salt Lake City and is one of the fastest-growing communities in the state. The school district has an average increase in students of six percent each year. The area has not only experienced an explosion in housing development, but also improvements in transportation systems, employment opportunities, and retail development to accommodate the growth in population. A new junior high was built with the last bond election funding, so the school boundaries were adjusted for the current school year. The school population was cut from 1,128 students to 554 students.

- a) What significant findings were revealed by the school's analysis of its profile?
 - The most significant factor is that discipline issues have reduced dramatically over the past three years.
- b) What modifications to the school profile should the school consider for the future?

The profile would be more meaningful if it included disaggregated data (see suggested areas for further inquiry below). This data shows who is learning and who is not learning so that the school may target the needs of learners.

Suggested Areas for Further Inquiry:

- Disaggregate CRT data by gender, ethnicity, ELL, special education status, and poverty.
- Disaggregate attendance data by gender, ethnicity, ELL, special education status, and poverty.
- Disaggregate grading data by gender, ethnicity, ELL, special education status, and poverty.

CHAPTER 2: THE SELF-STUDY PROCESS

a) To what extent has the school community engaged in a collaborative self-study process on behalf of students?

Despite the changes in administration, boundaries, and staff, there is evidence that the school involved all of the major stakeholders in the self-study process. The Visiting Team was also pleased to see the involvement of students in the process. The Visiting Team reminds the school that this is just the beginning of effective collaboration with the school community. Effective schools are *continually* engaged in self-analysis, collaboration, data collection, data analysis, and instructional improvement.

b) To what extent does the school's self-study accurately reflect the school's current strengths and limitations?

The data was able to show the school's strengths and weaknesses. However, the self-study would have been much more accurate and more in depth if the school had included and analyzed disaggregated data.

CHAPTER 3: INSTRUCTIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS

Tooele Junior High School's desired results for student learning (DRSLs) are as follows:

Self-Direction and Confidence

A confident student is self-directed, responsible, has experienced success in the classroom, and believes in his or her ability to near and succeed in a changing world.

Performance Indicators:

- Students develop skills for acquiring and processing correct information.
- Students show initiative for task completion and problem solving.
- Students participate with parents in the Education Occupation Plan by reviewing academic performance, testing, self-knowledge, goal setting, values, strengths, interests, and career activities.
- Teachers and students work cooperatively to create a safe and orderly learning environment.
- Students gain confidence through developing technological skills.

Diverse Life Long Learner

A life long learner is inquisitive and can adapt and progress in a changing world.

Performance indicators:

- Students participate in Life Skills training.
- Students are provided foundational, academic, and behavioral skills.
- Students are taught to evaluate, process, and apply problem-solving strategies individually and cooperatively.
- Students will be critical interpreters of the media and technology.

Effective Communicator

Students will respectfully demonstrate receptive and expressive communication skills.

Performance Indicators:

- Students can recognize receptive and expressive communication skills.
- Students will demonstrate effective communication through listening, reading, writing, and speaking.
- Students develop effective communication skills through the use of current technology.

Shared Vision, Beliefs, Mission, and Goals:

- a) To what extent did the school facilitate a collaborative process to build a shared vision for the school (mission) that defines a compelling purpose and direction for the school?
 - Consensus for the school's mission statement, shared vision, beliefs, and goals was achieved through meetings of parent groups, faculty and staff discussion, and meetings with administration. The Visiting Team found evidence of a collaborative effort to arrive at consensus that involved all stakeholders.
- b) To what extent has the school defined a set of beliefs that reflect the commitment of the administration and staff to support student achievement and success?
 - The school has defined a set of beliefs that reflect the commitment of the administration, faculty, and staff to support student achievement. The belief statements reflect the school's dedication to appropriate education for young adolescents, and provide the foundation for helping students to succeed in the changing world.
- c) To what extent do the school's mission and beliefs align to support the school's desired results for student learning (DRSLs)?
 - The school's DRSLs (i.e., Self-Direction and Confidence, Diverse Lifelong Learner, Effective Communicator) are aligned to the mission and belief

statements, which drove the selection and articulation of the school's desired results for student learning.

Curriculum Development:

a) To what extent does the staff work collaboratively to ensure the curriculum is based on clearly defined standards and the Utah Core Curriculum (with inclusion of the Utah Life Skills)?

The Tooele School District has a curriculum that the teachers follow, with the exception of world languages. The curriculum is based on the USOE standards. The departments works together to revise and adapt the maps. Some departments are small because of the size of the school. Several of the departments are put together in a "miscellaneous" department. Because of the diversity of these departments, there is not much collaborative work on the curriculum maps. The teachers say that they are continually working on updating the curriculum maps.

The Utah Life Skills were posted in some classrooms as well as in the hallway. However, there was no evidence that the DRSLs were created with inclusion of these skills. The students know the DRSLs and seem to understand how they apply to their learning.

According to a survey given to the teaching staff, a high percentage of the faculty members agreed that instruction must align with the core goals. However, less than half of the teachers responded that they frequently look at the core, and only a few more said they often looked at the core standards.

b) To what extent does the teaching staff work collaboratively to support the development of a curriculum that focuses on the school's desired results for student learning?

The belief statements claim that student learning is the priority and that academic success is a direct result of student effort. This aligns to self-direction, lifelong learning, and having students be effective communicators. The teaching staff supports this by participating in Life Skills training—evaluating, processing, and applying problem-solving strategies.

The staff has a very collegial atmosphere; they seem to work together well. The individual teachers seem to support the development of the curriculum; however, there is no evidence of teaming or school-wide collaboration on curriculum.

Another belief is that all students are capable of making academic and social progress and gaining confidence through developing technological skills. This aligns well with the DRSLs. The staff has many excellent, positive posters and

reminders posted in the hallways. The atmosphere of the school is that students and teachers are respected.

Quality Instructional Design:

a) To what extent does the professional staff design and implement a variety of learning experiences that actively engage students?

There are some classes with an excellent variety of teaching strategies, where students are doing manipulative and hands-on work, and other classes where the students are doing worksheets and don't seem to have a great deal of motivation. Overall, the staff could benefit from more integrated professional development to get new ideas about teaching strategies and to work on this as a faculty. Students indicated that they do have "hands-on" learning experiences in labs and other settings. They stated that they would like more lab experiences.

The teacher survey indicated that teachers direct the learning process about 85 percent of the time, and that students are also engaged in the learning process 90 percent to 95 percent of the time. That same survey indicated that students are offered opportunities to receive additional assistance frequently and/or often.

The survey also indicated that instruction was assessed most often by quizzes and exams, then by projects. There was also a high percentage of written observation and cooperative learning groups. The Visiting Team saw no evidence of true "cooperative learning" groups, but did see some group work.

When teachers were asked how the assessment data was used to improve instruction, two main things were mentioned: reteach and "tweak" instruction.

The school offers an interesting physical education elective course in outdoor survival. It includes working with a GPS, fly-tying, survival camping, and other outdoor life skills. Tooele Junior High School also offers a weightlifting class.

b) To what extent does the professional staff employ a variety of instructional strategies to ensure the needs of different learners are met?

There was some evidence of research-based instructional strategies. Some of these strategies include outlines, PowerPoint, writing, academic vocabulary, models, and paraphrasing. Although cooperative learning is a powerful and effective instructional strategy, the Visiting Team only witnessed group work. The Visiting Team suggests that the school consider professional development in Kagan cooperative structures.

c) To what extent do the professional staff and leadership provide additional opportunities which support student learning?

The curriculum ranges from severe special education to options for gifted students. There is a CBTU (Behavior Unit) program, honors classes, National Honors Society, MESA program, Science Olympiad and after-school tutoring.

According to the survey, the students are often offered opportunities to receive additional assistance. Science, math, and language arts tutoring is available to students after school, as well as remediation after school or during the summer. Student interviews revealed that students feel teachers are willing to help them any time they have a problem. They also receive some time to work on assignments during homeroom. If the homeroom teacher cannot help them, they are allowed to go to a teacher who can.

Quality Assessment Systems:

a) To what extent has the staff developed classroom or school-wide assessments based on clearly articulated expectations for student achievement?

Clearly articulated expectations have been identified school-wide with the DRSLs. The faculty focuses on teaching the core as outlined by the Utah State Office of Education. Expectations for student performance are clearly articulated within many of the classrooms. Some teachers identify areas where additional instruction or assistance is needed from pre- and post-tests. Lessons are then designed to raise student performance in those specific areas. State CRTs are used for school-wide assessments, but the school does not have an articulated system for content formative and summative assessments.

b) To what extent are assessments of student learning developed using methods that reflect the intended purpose and performance standards?

Many faculty members have defined performance standards and have aligned appropriate assessment instruments to those performance standards. Assessments are based on content standards and objectives designed to improve student learning. In addition to traditional assignments and testing, student achievement is measured using journals, games, portfolios, PowerPoint presentations, special projects and hands-on activities. Multiple assessments are in place in some classrooms, and rubrics are designed to clarify expectations regarding specific assignments. Some faculty members are still very limited in their development and implementation of multiple assessment instruments and the use of rubrics.

c) To what extent are assessments designed, developed, and used in a fair and equitable manner?

For the most part, the faculty is committed to fair and equitable assessment of student performance. Accommodations are made for students with special needs.

Teachers are available to assist students when they choose to correct mistakes they have made on tests. A greater assurance of equity and fairness will occur as more staff members learn to use multiple assessments and work through the process of clearly identifying performance standards, and aligning appropriate assessments to those standards.

Leadership for School Improvement:

- a) To what extent does the school leadership promote quality instruction by fostering an academic learning climate and actively supporting teaching and learning?
 - There is ample evidence of positive support for teachers by the leadership team. The focus is currently on developing trust and relationships. There is not as much evidence in relation to instructional leadership.
- b) To what extent does the school leadership employ effective decision making that is data-driven, research-based, and collaborative?
 - Decisions at Tooele Junior High School are collaborative, and many stakeholders are involved in the process. Teachers at the school collaborate together and work together often. There is a need for more data-driven and research-based decision making.
- c) To what extent does the school leadership monitor progress in student achievement and instructional effectiveness through a comprehensive assessment system and continuous reflection?
 - There is a review of CRT data, and the leadership used that review to find the need for more focused reading instruction in the school. Continuous reflection will occur when the school utilizes formative, common assessment data and uses that data to determine if students are learning established standards.
- d) To what extent does the school leadership provide skillful stewardship by ensuring management of the organization, operations, and resources of the school for a safe, efficient, and effective learning environment?
 - The school is safe and managed effectively.
- e) To what extent does the school leadership make decisions related to the allocation and use of resources which align with the school goals, the achievement of the DRSLs, and school improvement efforts?
 - Most school resources are allocated based upon their alignment with school goals. When the school designs a professional development plan, it will help align resources for teacher professional learning.

f) To what extent does the school leadership empower the school community and encourage commitment, participation, collaboration, and shared responsibility for student learning?

Tooele Junior High School has an active and involved Community Council. The school leadership team utilizes the ideas, resources, and judgment of this body in the day-to-day operation of the school. The administration strongly encourages participation and suggestions from members of the greater community, and acts upon suggestions that are appropriate and proper.

Community Building:

a) To what extent does the school foster community building and working relationships within the school?

The Visiting Team was impressed by the sense of community that exists among the staff and students. Tooele Junior. High School is dedicated to promoting positive and productive relationships among students, teachers, and administrators. The staff shows great sensitivity to the developmental needs of the students, and is committed to helping students. For example, the school offers several programs for students with diverse needs, and has a "no tolerance" bullying policy; after-school tutoring, the Renaissance Club, and Student of the Month support the school mission and DRSLs by providing opportunities for students to celebrate good behavior, attendance, and self direction.

b) To what extent does the school extend the school community through collaborative networks that support student learning?

Tooele Junior High School is working constantly to improve communication with the community. The staff reaches out to parents and families to engage them as partners in the learning process through a variety of programs, including the School Community Council, SEOPs, Reality Town, SIS, parent-teacher conferences, newsletters, Job Shadow, and the Tooele County Summit.

A survey was given to parents and community members in 2005. Data was complied in the following areas: Quality of the Instructional Programs, Support for Student Learning, School Climate/Environment for learning, Parent/Community/School Relationships, and Resource Management. The main concerns found in the survey were the issues of bullying and the school environment.

Culture of Continuous Improvement and Learning:

a) To what extent does the school build skills and the capacity for improvement through comprehensive and ongoing professional development programs focused on the school's goals for improvement?

Several faculty members continually strive to increase their knowledge and skills through in-service, educational classes, seminars, and other professional development opportunities, both in-school and on a district level. They have been trained in best practices, the Six Traits of Writing, and a variety of instructional strategies. Sixteen to eighteen hours of formal, principal-directed professional development are provided in school each year. The school administration makes every effort to inform the faculty of additional professional development opportunities through e-mails, newsletters, and posters.

b) To what extent does the school create conditions that support productive change and continuous improvement?

The school and district administrations assist teachers in their professional growth through the allocation of time and resources. In some cases they supply substitute teachers, and in many instances monetary support to pay for workshop fees and expenses. However, teachers are often required to sacrifice personal preparation time in order to attend professional development strands. As a result, it is difficult for them to make the preparations necessary to get the logistics of teaching done. The school administration encourages and supports the implementation of teaching strategies and educational programs faculty members bring back to the school from professional development ventures. They are very willing to supply the technology or other materials needed to successfully implement these new strategies or programs at Tooele Junior High School.

CHAPTER 4: NORTHWEST ASSOCIATION OF ACCREDITED SCHOOLS (NAAS) STANDARDS

Tooele Junior High School has not sought accreditation through Northwest Association of Accredited Schools. Most Utah public junior high/middle schools are not accredited through NAAS, but only by the USOE. It is their choice to join NAAS or not.

CHAPTER 5: SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT EFFORTS – ACTION PLAN

a) To what extent is the school-wide action plan adequate in addressing the critical areas for follow-up?

While the action plan is aligned with the school profile, beliefs, mission, and DRSLs and there is follow-up, there is a need for more details with regard to who is responsible for each action item and the evidence needed to show that the goal has been completed.

b) To what extent is there sufficient commitment to the action plan, school-wide and system-wide?

The Visiting Team found ample evidence of commitment to the action plan from the administration, faculty, Community Council, and district personnel.

c) How sound does the follow-up process that the school intends to use for monitoring the accomplishments of the school-wide action plan appear to be?

The Visiting Team suggests that the action plan include more details with regard to student learning and the evidence needed to show goal completion. However, there is assurance that the plan will be followed and utilized for school improvement. The plan will be monitored.

CHAPTER 6: MAJOR COMMENDATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE VISITING TEAM

Commendations:

- The Visiting Team commends Tooele Junior High School for completing the accreditation process and for participating in the study and analysis of student learning data, departmental and organizational effectiveness, and goal setting. The Visiting Team further commends the school for including students in the self-study process.
- The Visiting Team commends the staff for its positive rapport with students and for making students feel welcome and cared for. The Visiting Team was told over and over by students how much they enjoy their teachers.
- The Visiting Team commends the faculty members for their collegiality, and for their willingness to work together. The Visiting Team further commends the

school for having open communication between the faculty and the administration.

- The Visiting Team commends the school for fostering a positive school climate. Students appear to get along, show respect for one another, and be happy.
- The Visiting Team commends the school's custodial team for their efficient and effective maintenance of a 43-year-old building that is clean and comfortable.
- The Visiting Team commends the school leadership team for initiating an open and honest dialogue with the community and parents, and for listening and acting upon suggestions.
- The Visiting Team commends the School Community Council for being a proactive organization, and for making their focus and priority student success.
- The Visiting Team commends Tooele Junior High for the positive transition that occurred with regard to the recent boundary change and the changes in students and personnel.

Recommendations:

- The action plan needs to include more specific goals with regard to student learning outcomes and more specificity with regard to who is responsible for each goal. Most importantly, the action plan needs to indicate what evidence will be needed to show the goal is completed.
- The Visiting Team recommends that the school design a detailed professional development and professional learning plan that is aligned with your action plan and has a major focus on embedded, school-based professional learning. The Visiting Team further recommends that professional learning include time for teacher collaboration to address the following essential questions:
 - 1). What should our students know, understand, and be able to do (unwrapping the core/enduring understandings)?
 - 2). What evidence do we need to show that our students know, understand, and are able to apply the content (formative and summative assessments)?
 - 3). What will we do if our students are not proficient in the content standards (interventions)?
- The Visiting Team recommends that the faculty make a careful analysis of assessments and how they are designed and used. Assessment is evidence of proficiency of standards (enduring understandings). How authentic are assessments? Are assessments aligned 100 percent to standards? How are performance assessments and writing utilized? Is assessment data used to drive instruction and the learning needs of students?

- The Visiting Team recommends that the school incorporate more research-based instructional practices and strategies that result in higher student achievement. Instructional strategies should also be developmentally appropriate for the young adolescent. For example, the Visiting Team saw evidence of a lot of group work, but no evidence of highly effective cooperative learning structures.
- With the school's grade 7-8 configuration and new boundary alignment with a smaller student body, the Visiting Team recommends that the administration and staff explore the middle-level philosophy and the concept of interdisciplinary teaming, flexible schedules, advisory, and so forth. The Visiting Team suggests that the school use the work of the National Forum to Accelerate Middle Grades Reform and the National Middle School Association as a resource.